

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5892

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJECT: DISPUTE BETWEEN RIF-AT AL-ASAD AND INTERIOR
MINISTER DABBAGH

1. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN RIF-AT
AL-ASAD (PRESIDENT'S BROTHER AND COMMANDER OF DEFENSE COMPANIES)
AND NEWLY APPOINTED INTERIOR MINISTER ADNAN DABBAGH.
ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, SYRIA'S PUBLIC PROSECUTOR ARRESTED
OFFICER IN DEFENSE COMPANIS FOR CRIME LATTER ALLEGEDLY
COMMITTED. RIF'AT HAD MEETINGS WITH DABBAGH TO PROTEST
ARREST OF HIS SUBORDINATE, AND ORDERED DABBAGH TO RELEASE
OFFICER. DABBAGH REFUSED, CLAIMING HE ONLY RECEIVED
ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT. DABBAGH REPORTEDLY THREATENED TO
RESIGN IF RIF'AT WENT OVER HIS HEAD TO PRESIDENT ASAD TO
OBTAIN OFFICER'S RELEASE. SECOND SOURCE REPORTED THAT IN
MEANTIME, DABBAGH WAS PRIVATELY FURIOUS WITH PUBLIC PROSECUTOR
FOR HIS "NAIVETE" IN ARRESTING ONE OF RIF'AT'S OFFICERS
AND HAD HIM ARRESTED IN TURN.

2. COMMENT: INCIDENT INTERESTING FOR LIGHT IT THROWS
UPON DABBAGH-RIF'AT AL-ASAD RELATIONSHIP, WHICH NOW
APPARENTLY SERIOUSLY STRAINED. IT IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD
IN DAMASCUS THAT DEFENSE COMPANIES OPERATE AS LAW UNTO
THEMSELVES AND THAT THEIR OFFICERS AND TROOPS TAKE
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LIBERAL ADVANTAGE OF IMMUNITIES AFFORDED BY SERVING UNDER

SUCH A POWERFUL PATRON. DABBAGH HOWEVER IS NOT SOMEONE
TO BE LIGHTLY TREATED, AND UNDOUBTEDLY FELT STRONG
RESENTMENT AT RIF'AT THROWING HIS WEIGHT AROUND. WHILE
WE DOUBT PRES. ASAD WILL LET DISPUTE GET OUT OF HAND, AT
SAME TIME HE CANNOT BE VERY HAPPY ABOUT FLARE-UP BETWEEN
TWO SUPPORTERS WITH KEY ROLES IN COORDINATING EFFORTS TO
ENSURE REGIME'S INTERNAL SECURITY.
PELLETREAU

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